

## **Tour Southern Indiana to discover Hoosier history.**

By Sally Campbell Grout

From fossil beds that stretch back millions of years to a long-lived theme park that always seems to get younger to a rolling river that has provided a beautiful backdrop for generations, Southern Indiana is filled with fascinating history--both natural and man made. It's easy to explore it all on a Southern Indiana driving tour.

### **Funny. They don't look a day over 300 million.**

Start your trip in Clarksville, at Falls of the Ohio State Park (812-280-9970). While the park offers great opportunities for fishing, hiking, bird watching, and picnicking, the "must do" activity is checking out the fossils. A 220-acre fossil bed, clocking in at 386 million years old, gives you a glimpse of the Devonian age. Also known as the "Age of the Fish," the Devonian period refers to a time when the land that's now Indiana and Kentucky could be found at the bottom of a tropical sea about 20 degrees south of the equator.

### **Where the weatherman is always right.**

From Clarksville, take I-64 to Highway 135 South. Wind your way toward Squire Boone Caverns in Mauckport (888-934-1804). Discovered by Squire Boone and his brother Daniel in 1790, the caves and caverns are an incredible collection of stalactites, stalagmites, and cave coral. On your tour, look and listen for the cave crickets, blind crayfish, and bats that still call the cave home. Competing with caves in the category of best natural wonder: the rushing rivers and waterfalls that carry over a million gallons of water through Squire Boone Caverns every day. Bring your jacket on the tour. No matter how hot it is outside, the temperature in the cave stays at about 54 degrees.

Above ground, the Village offers some pioneer fun that helps you experience what daily life might have been like for Squire Boone and his contemporaries. Enjoy gem mining, a rock shop, a bakery, a homemade candy store, a petting zoo, and candle dipping. The 1804 gristmill, rebuilt on the original foundation, runs on water from the caves.

### **A new state's first capitol.**

From Squire Boone Caverns take Highway 135 North to downtown Corydon. Most Hoosiers know that Corydon, not Indianapolis, served as the state's first capital city. But they may be pleasantly surprised to know that many places where Indiana laws were passed have been graciously preserved. The Corydon Capitol State Historic Site (812-738-4890), built between 1814 and 1816, is made of local limestone and poplar and walnut

logs. Restored to its original appearance, it's been a state memorial since 1930. But perhaps what happened outside the walls is just as important as what happened inside them. In June of 1816, the year Indiana became a state, delegates often worked outside under the shade of a tree that became known as "Constitution Elm." The trunk of that tree still stands. History buffs can also visit the governor's headquarters and other historic buildings.

**Why Sunday drives—and Sunday dinners--were invented.**

From Corydon, wind your way across Highway 62. Your destination is Leavenworth, but you'll want to take your time getting there. This portion of your trip follows the Ohio River Scenic Byway (800-489-4474). Consider this a sample, and save another weekend for the Byway's entire 302 miles, which roll along the mighty Ohio River. The Byway steers you toward some of Southern Indiana's most scenic spots, charming towns and engaging attractions. Among them: Leavenworth's Overlook Restaurant (812-739-4264), where you'll find fried chicken, homemade biscuits, pies, and an incredible 20-mile panoramic view of the river.

**Explore some incredible caves.**

Leavenworth is also the ideal spot to park your car for a while and take in some natural beauty, both above ground and under it. Start at the Wyandotte Caves U.S. National Landmark (888-70-CAVES). As caves go, this is one for the record books, literally. Home to the highest underground mountain, the largest subterranean room, and the world's largest stalagmite (at least among known caves), Wyandotte offers ample natural wonders to observe. Choose from among tours that run two, five, and eight hours.

Marengo Cave U.S. National Landmark (888-70-CAVES), in Marengo, is just 25 minutes or so north of Leavenworth, and offers more incredible underground sights. The Crystal Place Tour, which runs about 40 minutes, includes a stop in one of the nation's most beautiful cave rooms. The Dripstone Trail Tour, running about 70 minutes, showcases the delicate soda straw formations, slender totem pole stalagmites, and Penny Ceiling that contribute to this cave's incredible beauty.

Perhaps the best way to travel through this of the state isn't by road, but by water. Cave Country Canoes (888-70-CAVES) offers half-day, full-day, and two-day trips along the beautiful Blue River, Indiana's first Natural and Scenic River. As you paddle your canoe or kayak, you might see deer, otter, beaver, wild turkey, and blue heron, along with plenty of incredible foliage.

**Have fun now. And try to imagine it in the fall.**

Take I-64 west to 37 and hop onto Highway 66, which takes you through the southern part of the Hoosier National Forest (812-275-5987). Here, along with about a zillion trees, you'll find plenty of opportunities for outdoor activities including camping, fishing, swimming, boating, canoeing, hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking. Several areas are designated Wildlife View Sites.

**A lesson in waterways.**

Wind your way along Highway 66 to the historic town of Cannelton (888-343-6262), home to an 1849 cotton mill, an 1868 grade school, an 1896 courthouse museum, and a downtown that's listed on the National Register of Historic Places. If you time your visit right, you might see a boat docking through the Cannelton Locks and Dam.

**Get ready to see "wheeeee!"**

One of Southern Indiana's most popular destinations can be found just north of Cannelton. Take 66 to 245 to reach Holiday World & Splashin' Safari (877-GO FAMILY) in the ever-festive town of Santa Claus. Holiday World may be the nation's first theme park, but you'll notice something new every time you visit. This year, new attractions include Jungle Racer, the first 10-lane racing slide complex ever built, and the new Jungle Jets area featuring 163 water elements, such as geysers and drenching spray arches. Long-time favorites include the Raven and the Legend, two incredible wooden roller coasters. Little ones will find plenty of "not-quite-so-heart-racing" fun, too.

**Where Lincoln grew up.**

While we can't quite claim him as a Hoosier (he was born in Kentucky) Abraham Lincoln moved to Indiana at age seven and grew up here. Just west of Santa Claus, Lincoln's Indiana years are celebrated in several ways. The Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial (812-937-4541) in Lincoln City, a National Park, is the site where Lincoln grew up. Walk the Lincoln Boyhood Trail; tour the Lincoln Living Historical Farm; see his mother's grave; learn more about this beloved president at the Visitor Center and in the film "Forging Greatness—Lincoln in Indiana." At Lincoln State Park (812-937-4710), also in Lincoln City, the story of Lincoln's younger years are told in an energetic musical outdoor drama, "Young Abe Lincoln" (800-264-4ABE). Important moments in Lincoln's life are highlighted in the drama, including his first encounter with slavery.

**Perfect harmony. Almost.**

Take I-64 farther west toward Historic New Harmony (812-682-4488). In 1814, a group of separatists from the German Lutheran Church settled to create a utopian community. Before returning to Pennsylvania 10 years later, they built the town of New Harmony. In 1925, social philosopher

Robert Owen bought the town for a second experiment in communal living. Today, you can tour unique wooden structures, modern architecture, 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings, and formal and casual gardens built by these early residents. One of New Harmony's most striking attractions is a hedge labyrinth, which, to Harmonists, symbolized life's journey to true harmony and perfection.

**Ready to plan more road trips?**

You'll find plenty of other interesting places to visit in Southern Indiana—and throughout the state—at [enjoyindiana.com](http://enjoyindiana.com).